
CIRM Signs Agreement with France – As the French Debate the Ethics of Stem Cell Science

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The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), the state's stem cell agency, has signed a collaborative agreement on stem cell research with the French Government's Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR).

The agreement between CIRM and the French Government coincides with news of the birth of France's first "saviour sibling," a designer baby conceived in vitro to provide stem cells to treat a brother suffering from beta thalassemia, a severe blood disorder which destroys red blood cells and can lead to anemia.

Born on January 26th at the Antoine Bécélère hospital near Paris, Umut Talha (Turkish for "our hope") was screened as an embryo so that his parents knew he would not suffer the same genetic disorder that has afflicted his siblings.

CIRM's President, Dr Alan Trounson, said that one of CIRM's primary goals is to accelerate the field of stem cell research internationally as well as in California and the US. "In some instances we can do this more effectively through collaborations that involve the best scientific endeavors, regardless of geography," he said.

"France is developing a major national program in stem cells and regenerative medicine that can be effectively matched with California's excellence in stem cell science that is rapidly evolving in academic and biotechnology settings. I would expect major developments for patients to occur through this new partnership."

The agreement will make it easier for researchers in California and France to obtain joint funding to broaden the potential pool of expertise that can be applied toward research in a specific area. It is expected that researchers in both jurisdictions will be invited to form teams that will apply jointly for funding through a process that builds upon routine CIRM and French agency procedures. For those that are approved, CIRM will fund the California researchers and the French agency, ANR, will fund the French researchers.

The agreement notes that both agencies will assure the research is conducted in "compliance with the highest standards for ethical conduct and safety at all stages of research including clinical study."

France joins a recent signatory to partnering California – Australia – as well as seven other nations including India, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, China, Spain and Japan—as a partner in accelerating critical stem cell research to relieve the suffering of patients and families throughout the world, Dr Trounson said.

About CIRM: CIRM was established in November 2004 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. A list of grants and loans awarded to date may be seen here: <http://www.cirm.ca.gov/for-researchers/researchfunding>.

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